

Introduction Page

The Santa Clara Unit is unique to the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, located between the east side of the San Francisco Bay and the western Sacramento / San Joaquin valley, encompassing the Counties of Contra Costa, Alameda, Santa Clara, and western portions of Stanislaus and San Joaquin. There are a total of 1.3 million acres of direct protection area within the unit, and a combined population of 5.4 million people and are covered by Valley Air Quality Management and Bay Area Air Quality Management Districts that the Units management staff work closely with to reduce smoke plume impact of our Vegetation Management program and wildland fire activity upon the local population.

The major population centers include the cities of San Jose and the surrounding, "Silicon Valley," Oakland, Berkley, Livermore/Pleasanton, Walnut Creek, Concord, Martinez and Richmond. Numerous major highways run through the unit and daily traffic congestion is a constant within the unit. Technology, manufacturing, heavy industry, three major sea ports, and three major airports all drive a large portion of the 5th largest economy in the world. Given the large population concentration in the unit recreational use and open space preservation issues are constantly being addressed

Vegetation types in the unit range from annual grasses and brush in the eastern areas to large 80 plus year old brush fields and Coastal Redwood on the western edge of the unit. Recent large damaging fire's include the Lexington Fire (1985 13,128 ac), the Tunnel Fire (1991 1624 ac, 25 deaths and 3500 structures) the Croy Fire (2002 3007 ac and 300 structures) and the Santa Clara Complex (2003 32,000 ac). With the current population levels in the unit and the intrusion of urban development into wildland, the Santa Clara Unit is taking every opportunity to be pro-active wildland fuels management. The unit is heavily involved in fire protection planning programs with our local cooperators to address existing problems, and identify areas where we can implement changes early in the planning stages. The Santa Clara Unit is located in an active earth quake fault area, as evidenced by the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, which the unit was heavily involved in the emergency response to.

Two Fire Safe Council's, Santa Clara Fire Safe, Diablo Fire Safe, and a working group formed after the Tunnel Fire to address projects in the local jurisdictions in the East Bay Hills interface areas, the Hills Emergency Forum are involved with fire safety and planning in the five county area. With input and cooperation from these groups, and the other stakeholder groups, the Unit managers establish goals and projects in the unit Fire Management plan to reduce the threat of large damaging fires. The document is the units' template for fuels reduction projects to pending, completed, and for general public review, and comment. The units Fire Plan allows us to respond to the needs and concerns of the public and identifies projects to be funded through cooperative grants and donations.

Through the use of this Fire Management Plan the Santa Clara Unit is working to reduce unplanned ignitions within the unit, limit damage caused by uncontrolled fires, through the use of education, pre fire mitigation projects, patrol, and law enforcement to meet the mission statement of the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.